

The Confessor's Tongue for October 19, 2008

17th Sunday After Pentecost: Prophet Joel, Martyr Varus

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

19 October Prophet Joel

Second of the 12 Minor Prophets, according to tradition, he descended from the root of Reuben and prophesied 800 years before Christ. He predicted the desolation of Jerusalem, the descent of the Holy Spirit on all flesh and the Dread Judgment.

19 October Martyr Varus

St. Varus was a warrior and lived in Egypt during the reign of Emperor Maximinus. "Having seen the honorable passion and having lovingly kissed the chains of the martyrs", he was filled "with divine boldness"; voluntarily confessed himself a Christian, "not fearing death nor the prospect of being tortured". Hanged on a tree, he was sentenced to heavy torture, but "patiently endured "the flame of unbearable illnesses", when he turned his spirit over to God in about the year 307. Seven Christian teachers were beheaded by the sword soon after his demise. Blessed Cleopatra, a pious widow from Palestine, transferred the relics of St. Varus to Palestine and placed them in a newly constructed church in his honor. Her son died on the day of the consecration of the newly constructed church, but the grieving mother was comforted in a vision in which St. Varus and John were adorned with a crown of eternal blessedness. St. Cleopatra died peacefully, not later than 327 A.D. In the church services St. Cleopatra is also glorified with Martyr Varus; although her son John is commemorated in the service, he is not mentioned by name. From the *Bulgakov Handbook*, translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris. Copyright © 1999-2006. All rights are reserved.

The God-Man

The Foundation of the Truth of Orthodoxy

St. Justin Popovich (+1979)

All the truths of Orthodoxy emerge from one truth and converge on one truth, infinite and eternal. That truth is the God-man Christ. If you experience any truth of Orthodoxy to its limit, you will inevitably discover that its kernel is the God-man Christ. In fact, all the truths of Orthodoxy are nothing other than different aspects of the one Truth — the God-man Christ.

Orthodoxy is Orthodoxy by reason of the God-man, and not by reason of anything else or anyone else. Hence another name for Orthodoxy is God-manhood. In it nothing exists through man or by man, but everything comes from the God-man and exists through the God-man. This means that man experiences and finds out about the fundamental eternal truth of life and the world only with the help of the God-man, in the God-man. And it means something else: man learns the complete truth about man, about the purpose and meaning of his existence only through the God-man. Outside of Him a man turns into an apparition, into a scarecrow, into

nonsense. Instead of a man you find the dregs of a man, the fragments of a man, the scraps of a man. Therefore, true manhood lies only in God-manhood; and no other manhood exists under heaven.

"The outcome of man's struggle with death, sin, and the devil is always defeat, unless he is led by the God-man."

Why is the God-man the fundamental truth of Orthodoxy? Because He answered all the questions that torture and torment the human spirit: the question of life and death, the question of good and evil, the question of earth and heaven, the question of truth and falsehood, the question of love and hate, the question of justice and injustice. In brief: the question of man and God.

Why is the God-man the fundamental truth of Orthodoxy? Because He proved in the most obvious way by His own earthly life that He is the incarnate, humanized, and personified eternal Truth, eternal Justice, eternal Love, eternal Joy, eternal Power: Total-Truth, Total-Justice, Total-Love, Total-Joy, Total-Power.

He brought down all the divine perfections from heaven to earth. And He did not just bring them down, but also taught them to us and gave us grace-filled power to transform them into our life, into our thoughts, into our feelings, into our deeds. Hence, our calling is to incarnate them in ourselves and in the world around us.

Consider the best of the best people in the human race. In all of them it is the God-man that is best, most important and most eternal. For He is the holiness of the Saints, the martyrdom of the Martyrs, the righteousness of the Righteous, the apostleship of the Apostles, the goodness of the Good, the mercy of the Merciful, the love of the Loving. Why is the God-man each and every aspect of Orthodoxy? Because He, as One of the Holy Trinity, the incarnate Son of God, is distinct as God, as Comforter, as Defender, as Teacher, and as Savior. Only in Him, in the all-merciful Lord Jesus, does man, tormented by earthly tragedies, find the God who can truly give meaning to suffering, the Comforter who can truly give comfort in every misfortune and sorrow, the Defender who can truly defend from every evil, the Savior who can truly save from death and sin, the Teacher who can truly teach eternal Truth and Justice.

The God-man is each and every aspect of Orthodoxy, for He infinitely magnifies man. He elevates him to God; He makes him a god by grace. And He did this without reckoning man less than God, but filled man with all divine perfections. The God-man has glorified man as no other has. He has given him life eternal, Truth eternal, Love eternal, Justice eternal, Joy eternal, Goodness eternal,

Blessedness eternal. Man has become divine majesty through the God-man.

While the God-man is the fundamental truth of Orthodoxy, the fundamental truth of every heterodoxy is man, or fragments of his being — reason, the will, the senses, the soul, the body, expertise.

Integral man does not exist in heterodoxy; the whole man is divided into atoms, into particles. And it is all for the glory of man's greatness. But just as art for the sake of art is nonsense, so also is it nonsense to say man for the sake of man. That path leads to a most pitiful pandemonium, where man is the supreme idol — and nowhere is there a more pitiful idol than he.

The first truth of Orthodoxy is that man does not exist for the sake of man, but for the sake of God or, more fully, for the sake of the God-man. Therefore, we stay with the God-man in the name of man. In Him alone is an understanding of man's being possible; in Him alone is a justification for man's existence possible. All the mysteries of heaven and earth are attained in this truth, all the values of all the worlds that man can contemplate, all the joys of all the perfections that man can attain.

Indirectly and directly, the God-man is everything in Orthodoxy, and thus man is in Him, but in heterodoxy there is merely man.

In its very essence, Orthodoxy is nothing other than the Personality of the God-man Christ extended across all ages, extended as the Church. Orthodoxy has its own seal and sign by which it distinguishes itself. It is the radiant Person of the God-man Jesus.

Everything that does not have that Person is not Orthodox. Everything that does not have the God-man's Justice, Truth, Love, and Eternity is not Orthodox. Everything that wants to carry out the God-man's Gospel in this world through the methods of this world and through the methods of the kingdoms of this world is not Orthodox, but implies enslavement to the third temptation of the devil.

To be Orthodox means to have the God-man constantly in your soul, to live in Him, think in Him, feel in Him, act in Him. In other words, to be Orthodox means to be a Christ-bearer and a Spirit-bearer.

A man attains this when, in the body of Christ — the Church, his whole being is filled with the God-man Christ from top to bottom. For this reason the Orthodox man is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3).

The God-man is the axis of all worlds, from the world of the atom to the world of the cherubim. Whatever being breaks off from that axis, tumbles into terror, into tortures, into agony. Lucifer broke off — and became Satan; angels broke off — and became demons; man broke off in large part — and became inhuman (non-man).

Anything created that breaks off from it inevitably plunges into chaos and grief. And when a

people, as a group, deny the God-man, their history turns into a journey through hell and its horrors.

The God-man is not just the fundamental truth of Orthodoxy, but the power and omnipotence of Orthodoxy as well; for He alone saves man from death, sin, and the devil.

No man whatsoever, nor even mankind as a whole ever could, can, or will be able to do that. The outcome of man's struggle with death, sin, and the devil is always defeat, unless he is led by the God-man. Only through the God-man Christ can man conquer death, sin, and the devil.

Hence, the purpose of man is: to fill himself with the God-man, in His body — the Orthodox Church; to be transfigured in Him through grace-filled feats; to become omnipotent. Even while he walks prayerfully through the gloomy earthly anthill in the body, in his soul he lives above, where Christ Sits at the right hand of God, for his life is constantly stretched out between earth and heaven by prayers, like a rainbow that connects the summit of heaven with the abyss of earth.

To become immortal in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become God, to become the God-man — this is the purpose, the true purpose of the whole human race. It is also the joy, the only joy in this world of boundless sorrow and toxic bitterness.

Orthodoxy is Orthodoxy through the God-man. And we Orthodox, by confessing the God-man, indirectly confess the Christ-image of man, the divine origin of man, the divine exaltation of man, and thus also the divine value and sacredness of the human personality.

In fact, the struggle for the God-man is the struggle for man. Not the humanists, but the people of the Orthodox faith and life of the God-man are struggling for true man, man in the image of God and the image of Christ.

October Namedays

9 Dean Northcutt & Gareth Barnard (St. Tikhon)
18 Peter (Chris) Jones (St. Peter of Montenegro)

October Birthdays

1 Michael Rodgers
20 Becki Stevenson

Upcoming Events 2008

- 24 October, Friday, 8:00 p.m. Abbot Jonah to speak on the Jesus Prayer.
- 26 October, Sunday, 5:00 p.m. OCF meeting at rectory with group from Plano.
- 1 November, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. at St. Seraphim's in Dallas: Consecration of Abbot Jonah to the Episcopacy.
- 9 November, Sunday: Visit of Bishops
- 15 November: Nativity Fast Begins
- 12-13 December: All-Night Vigil & Liturgy for St. Herman of Alaska.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!